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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE, AND EUR/SSA, NSC FOR BRAUN,
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO'S NEXT UN ADMINISTRATOR: THACI WEIGHS IN

REF: PRISTINA 513

Classified By: COM PHILIP S. GOLDBERG FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Opposition party leader Hashim Thaci requested a meeting June 19 with COM to convey his concern that current UNMIK economic pillar head, Joachim Rucker, is rumored as a leading candidate to fill the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) position from which current SRSG Soren Jessen-Petersen has resigned effective June 30. Thaci alleged that Rucker had overseen a "corrupt" Kosovo privatization process and is therefore an unsuitable candidate to become SRSG and complained that for a smooth Kosovo final status process the Democratic Party of Kosovo's (PDK) needs to work with an SRSG with whom it feels comfortable. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Hashim Thaci, leader of the opposition Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), requested a June 19 meeting with the COM during which Thaci laid out his and his party's concern with rumors circulating in Kosovo that Joachim Rucker, a German national who is currently UNMIK economic pillar head and a deputy SRSG, would succeed out-going SRSG Soren Jessen-Petersen. Jessen-Petersen resigned as SRSG on June 12, effective June 30.

13. (C) Thaci's complaints echo a familiar PDK refrain: Rucker oversaw a "corrupt" privatization program in Kosovo and was allegedly responsible for financial "scandals" at Kosovo's electric utility (KEK) and at Pristina International Airport (PIA). (NOTE: The U.N.'s own September 2005 Internal Oversight Services report alleged systemic corruption, fraud, and mismanagement at publicly-owned enterprises PIA and KEK. Rucker was not in Kosovo at the time of the events described in the report. Probably more important to Thaci was Rucker's decision to move ahead with the Ferronickeli smelter against the wishes of the PDK. Moreover, Rucker had done a lot to advance Kosovo's economic interests. END NOTE.)

14. (C) COM replied that the selection of a new SRSG was more for the U.N. and E.U. to decide than the USG. Suggesting Thaci convey his concerns to local E.U. and U.N. representatives, COM also said that he believed Rucker to be an honest and straightforward public official who has acted in the best interest of Kosovo during his tenure. Thaci

responded that he thought it best that Jessen-Petersen's successor be "someone with whom the PDK is comfortable" in order to implement a status agreement.

15. (C) COMMENT. Thaci and Jessen-Petersen have had a strained relationship over the past year due to Thaci's belief that Jessen-Petersen did not do enough to advance his or the PDK's interests. Jessen-Petersen's June 19 decision to postpone local elections over PDK opposition, and his refusal to create a broad coalition government including the PDK (or "technical government" as Thaci insists on calling it) added to Thaci's feelings toward the SRSG (reftel). Thaci used his familiar refrain -- unsubstantiated corruption charges against those in authority -- to smear Rucker. If appointed, Rucker would be the second German to be the U.N.'s head in Kosovo and his term would coincide with the September 1 arrival of German General Roland Kater as the commander of NATO forces in Kosovo. While we dismiss Thaci's concerns with Rucker's qualifications and privatization record, we recognize the concern of having German heads of both Kosovo's administrative (UNMIK) and military entities (KFOR) during the most important stage of final status talks. END COMMENT.

16. (U) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable for release to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari with the exception of paragraph 5.
GOLDBERG